

1839

ESSEX INSTITUTE

## ANNUAL REPORT.

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The School Committee of the Town of Gloucester, as by law directed, submit this, their ANNUAL REPORT, to the Town.

The Father of our Country, the immortal Washington, in that invaluable legacy of the wisdom gathered from his long and richly varied experience, his Farewell Address, enjoins upon the American people the care of popular education, as among the highest of duties, and essential to the well being of a free community. We will quote his words:—

“It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of a popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?”

“Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.”

Your Committee felt the full force of this solemn injunction, and they entered upon the discharge of the duties which devolved upon them with the determination to spare no effort for the improvement of the schools of the town, and to derive from them the greatest possible advantages both to the minds and to the hearts of the rising generation. To this end they have labored assiduously, and they have great reason to rejoice at their success.

Before proceeding to report upon the condition of the existing schools in the town, your Committee must be allowed to call the attention of the town to some requisitions of the laws of the Commonwealth at present disregarded here, to the serious loss and injury of the rising generation.

By the Fifth Section of the Law of Public Instruction—

“Every town, containing five hundred families or householders, shall, besides the schools prescribed in the preceding section, maintain a school, to be kept by a master of competent ability and good morals, who shall, in addition to the branches of learning before mentioned, give instruction in the history of the United States, book-keeping, surveying, geometry, algebra; and such last mentioned school shall be kept for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the town, ten months at least, exclusive of vacations, in each year, and at such

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“convenient place, or alternately at such places in the town, as the said inhabitants at their annual meeting shall determine and in every town containing four thousand inhabitants, the said master shall, in addition to all the branches of instruction, before required in this chapter, be competent to instruct in the *Latin and Greek languages, and general history, rhetoric and logic.*”

Your Committee would respectfully submit to the town whether it is consistent with the obligation of good citizens to obey the laws, with the respect which the town owes to its own character and reputation, with the regard which we ought to feel for the welfare of those who are to come after us, or even with the first principles of common honesty, any longer grossly to violate or cunningly to evade the wholesome provisions of the statute just quoted. To vote that every district school in the town shall be a town grammar school, without providing the means to make it such, is as much to the purpose as to vote that a calf shall be an elephant. The vote does not change the nature of the thing. Our district schools are not the town grammar schools described in the statute, though they are excellent and most admirable institutions in their place. To establish a real town grammar school in every district would cost vastly more than the town can afford to raise. But we ask every voter in this town whether it is becoming a town of nine thousand inhabitants to attempt to shield itself from the performance of a statute duty by a fraudulent entry on its records, by a vote registered there for the inspection of the whole world, that a thing is what it is not, that our district schools are common town grammar schools. Has not such a proceeding, when well considered, too much of the nature of a paltry evasion? Ought we not rather to come up to the mark manfully, and do our duty, under the law?

The question whether the town be not really liable to twice the highest sum ever raised for the schools, by neglecting to provide for a town school, is a question of very little consequence compared with the manner in which the character of the town is implicated by any covert attempt to evade the law, or compared with the vital interests of our children left unprovided for.

That all education beyond the mere rudiments of learning taught in the district schools, ought to be confined to the families of a few fortunate citizens who can afford to send their children out of town to school, is a proposition so aristocratical and justly odious that it would not be listened to for a moment; yet such is the practical consequence of the neglect on the part of the town to provide higher schools. Unless it is for the interest of this town that the great mass of the next generation should grow up in comparative ignorance, while the most arduous efforts are making in every part of the State to elevate and improve our common school education, this crying evil calls aloud for a remedy. The Committee conceive that they have done their duty in calling the attention of their fellow citizens to this subject. It now remains for the town to do theirs.

In discharging their responsible office, your Committee have attached the highest importance to the selection of competent teachers for the schools. The town has not been niggardly in appropriating funds for the schools, but we have been sensible that those funds would be



utterly thrown away if wasted upon incompetent teachers. A month in a good school is worth more to a boy or girl, than six months under a master who teaches little useful knowledge, and with that little, many errors, which it will take longer to unlearn, than it would to have learned the truth in the first place. In most of the districts in the town we have met with the most cordial co-operation in our efforts. We are sorry to add that this has not been the case in all.

In the united districts No. 1 and 2, the schools have been well kept. The schools have derived the greatest advantages from the union of the districts.

The primary school for boys and girls has been kept by Miss Sophia C. Jones.

Whole number of scholars, from . . . . .	60 to 68
Average attendance, from . . . . .	50 to 60

Well kept.

The primary school for boys has been kept by Miss Lydia Dane.

Whole number, from . . . . .	57 to 68
Average attendance, from . . . . .	51 to 60

Well kept.

The Union High School for Girls was kept for the first part of the season by Mr George Garland.

Whole number . . . . .	87
Average attendance . . . . .	70 to 75

It will be seen that there is much too large a proportion of absences here.

Mr Garland's character, as a teacher, was unexceptionable. Under his care the School made the most gratifying progress. The United Districts were however very fast anticipating their income. For this reason it was determined unanimously to employ a female teacher in this school. Miss Maria L. Rogers was engaged accordingly, who has shown herself to be amply qualified for the task. This school is in excellent condition, as to order, good behavior, and good progress in the branches taught.

The high school for boys in these Districts has been kept by Mr Jonathan Wheeler, to the entire satisfaction of the Committee. The Register shows too many absences, but this evil is diminishing. Mr Wheeler's manner of teaching is admirably calculated to awaken the faculties of the children. They reason and understand, as well as remember. In this school; and in the last mentioned, there are many instances of excellent reading and the scholars deserve the praise of great exactness in their exercises.

In District No 3, the winter school was kept by Mr A. Franklin Edwards, with the assistance of Jonathan Burnham, 3d. Both these instructors have been very successful in the management of this large school. The whole number of scholars is

Girls . . . . .	64
Boys . . . . .	53

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And there are forty more children in the District for whom accommodation ought to be provided . . . . .	40
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Making in all . . . . .	157
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The ages of the girls vary from 4 to 17 years, and of the boys from 3 to 14 years, showing how much might be gained by dividing these children, according to their progress, into different schools as is done in Districts 1 and 2.

In District No. 4, the winter school has been kept by Mr William P. Hill, a young gentleman of talent and promise. The tendency to insubordination among the scholars in this district is not sufficiently discountenanced by the parents, and deserves the severest censure. The influence of the master must be seconded by the parents to produce the desired effect.

In District No. 5, the girls school was kept by Miss Sarah Garland.

Whole number of scholars	53
Average attendance	38

Far too many absences.

Scholars who are absent from a fourth to a third part of the time learn little while they are present.

The winter school was kept by Mr William Pool. Compared with most parts of the town, this school is in a very backward state. They need an energetic teacher to rouse their slumbering faculties. The children in this district are bright and capable, but they have not made half the progress which they might have made under different circumstances.

In District No 6—the conduct of this district has been of so singular a character as to deserve to be stated somewhat particularly.

The act of April 13th. 1838, in the second section, provides that—“The School Committee shall select and contract with the teachers for the town and district schools.”

This duty the Committee have endeavored to discharge conscientiously and to the utmost of their ability.

In the discharge of this duty, several weeks before the proper time of commencing the winter district schools, a meeting of the Committee was held at Mr Mason's Hotel, which was fully attended; at which meeting the credentials of several candidates proposed for teachers were submitted, and it was unanimously agreed that several of these candidates should be informed of the probability of their being employed in this town, in order that they might present themselves for examination.

Among the candidates thus unanimously agreed on, was Mr Peter Trask Woodbury of Bedford New Hampshire, a scholar of the highest standing in Dartmouth College, and whose written recommendations were, to say the least, not inferior to any others submitted to the Committee.

Circumstances which came to the knowledge of the Committee led them to apprehend that a portion of the District might be dissatisfied with any selection of a teacher which it was in our power to make. We therefore, acting with all possible caution, delayed the selection until the latest moment. In the mean time teachers were selected for various other schools

By the thirteenth and fourteenth sections of the Revised Statutes, chapter twenty-third, the school Committee are commanded to ascertain by personal examination of the instructors, their literary qualifications and capacity, and the instructor is required to obtain from them a



certificate of his qualifications, before he opens his school, without which he can receive no payment for his services.

Mr Woodbury was examined in the most severe and thorough manner, and answered every question proposed promptly and fully; so that no member of the Committee present had ever witnessed an examination more perfectly unexceptionable. No other candidate for this school had presented himself for examination, and there was no further time for delay.

It could not be ascertained that there was any prudential committee in the district, but it was understood that the key of the school-house was in the custody of Mr Elisha M. Oakes, formerly prudential committee. To him, therefore, the Town's Committee addressed a note, Dec. 1st, 1838, requesting that the house might be opened for the school. In this note they say:

"Mr P. T. Woodbury has been approbated by us for your school. *He was the only candidate who presented himself to us for examination for the school*, but we are happy to say that his examination was unusually satisfactory to us, and from his evident high qualifications, we allow ourselves to hope that his services will prove equally satisfactory to you and the whole district."

This letter was subscribed by Epes Ellery, L. B. Griffing, William Lamson, J. M. Moriarty, and R. Rantoul, Jr. No answer was received from Mr Oakes. The house was not opened, nor the key given up.

Mr Woodbury repaired constantly to the school house, but was unable to gain admission. The affair continued in this state until the 10th of December, when the Committee addressed to Mr Elisha M. Oakes, on behalf of the district, the following letter:

"Sir,

"By the 2d section of the school law of the last year [last session] it is provided that the School Committee shall select and contract with the teachers for the town and district schools. In obedience to this law we have selected and contracted with a teacher for your district school.

"The 45th section of the 23d chapter of the Revised Statutes provides, 'that if any school district shall neglect or refuse to establish a school—&c. &c. the School Committee of the town may establish such school, &c. as the Prudential Committee might have done.'

"As you have not prepared a suitable place for the school in your district, as you were bound to do by law, it is now our duty to provide for the keeping of the school. The house which is built for the school must be employed for that purpose.

"Please to deliver to the bearer the key of the district school house, and oblige,

"Yours, respectfully,

"EPES ELLERY,	} Committee."
"WM. LAMSON,	
"J. M. MORIARTY,	
"L. B. GRIFFING,	
"R. RANTOUL, JR.,	
"SIMEON BURNHAM,	

The key was soon after delivered to the Committee, and the house being opened, Mr Woodbury repaired there to teach the school. Two or three scholars presented themselves. On the morning of the 12th December the chimney was found obstructed with seaweed, which was removed; but on the 13th the chimney was found filled with seaweed frozen in with a mass of ice. This also was removed, and on the 14th a reward of TWENTY DOLLARS was offered for the discovery of the perpetrators of the outrage, by Messrs. Ellery, Moriarty, Burnham, Lamson, Rantoul, Sawyer, and Griffing, in behalf of the Committee.

After this, no scholar attended the school. The chimney was a third time obstructed, so as to make the house uninhabitable. Mr Woodbury was detained here, and was ready to teach any one scholar who might wish to learn, until the time for which he was engaged expired.

After means of instruction, equal to any ever offered in this town, have been provided for this district, of which the district have not chosen to avail themselves, they ask the town to refund to them the cost of the school—in other words, THAT A BOUNTY MAY BE PAID ON DISREGARD AND CONTEMPT OF THE LAWS, AND FOR THE PERPETUATION OF IGNORANCE. Of the wisdom of paying such a bounty, the town will judge.

Throughout the trying circumstances in which he was placed, Mr. Woodbury conducted himself with perfect propriety, self-possession, and dignity, evincing qualities which hold out the undoubted promise of extensive usefulness in after life. The Committee are not conscious that anything in their power or in the power of the instructor employed by them, which could conduce to the benefit of the school in this district, has been omitted or slighted. Without further remark, they leave this account for the consideration of the town.

In District No. 7, a school was kept three months, commencing March 26, 1838, by Samuel Andrew, of which we have no return. The winter school for boys was kept by David Leonard.

Whole number of scholars	60
Average attendance	55

In District No. 8, summer school six months by Martha Tarr—no return. Fall school for boys and girls kept by A. Kinison, 3 months.

Whole number	90
Average attendance	85

Winter school, kept by Andrew Kinison, three months for boys.

Whole number	60
Average attendance	58

A remarkable degree of punctuality.

In District No. 9, the spring term, by Miss Anne Norwood, and summer term, by Miss Clarkson—no returns. The winter school for boys and girls was kept by Mr John Davis, three months.

Whole number	60
Average attendance	58

Very punctual

In District No. 10, Mr Wood and Mr Perkins kept spring schools, from whom there are no returns. Miss Esther Hartley kept the school for boys and girls, from June 4th, six months.





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Whole number - - - - - 60  
 Average attendance - - - - - 55

Miss Orlena Wakefield kept a school for boys and girls five months, from July 2d.

Whole number - - - - - 60  
 Average attendance - - - - - 58  
 Very punctual.

The winter school for boys was kept by William Whipple three months, from Dec. 3.

Whole number - - - - - 60  
 Average attendance - - - - - 56

These Districts, 7, 8, 9, and 10, are the districts of Sandy Bay. The spring terms suffered from want of punctual attendance, but in the summer, fall and winter schools, there has been generally a very constant attendance; and in almost every case, great improvement both in good order and good behavior, as well as in their studies. To this remark there are a few exceptions.

The practice of the parents occasionally visiting the schools proves to be of great service.

The three Pigeon Cove Districts, are No. 11.

	Summer School, by	MISS WHITTREDGE.
	Winter " "	W. H. SWAIN.
No. 12.	Summer " "	S. W. BABSON.
	Winter " "	J. TARR, Jr.
No. 13.	Summer " "	MISS SWAIN.
	Winter " "	E. BRADSTREET.

The scholars in these schools have generally made great improvement in the several branches of learning, but there are no returns of the number on attendance.

In District No. 14, Rev. O. M. BROWN. Average number about 40.

Miss DODGE, summer school. Number, 35. Well taught, and great improvement.

In District No. 15. Mr Addison Davis kept this school. Order, and behavior good. School improved.

Miss E. POOL. School rather backward when commenced. The teacher skilful and efficient, but the attendance of the scholars *very* irregular. Number 26.

In District No. 16. Summer School kept by Miss Phillips. Number, 55. School backward. Great confusion by the variety of books. Some improvement.

School taught by F. W. Choate. Number 70. School very backward at first, but there has been a very rapid improvement. Mr Choate is a very industrious and energetic teacher, and the scholars have been unusually punctual and attentive.

In District No. 17. School well taught, by Miss A. M. Parker. Number, 45.

School taught by Mr J. M. Taylor, with great success. This school was never in a more flourishing condition.

In these four Districts of Annisquam, the schools are in a train of good improvement. Greater uniformity of books is necessary; more

punctual attendance should be enforced, and if the parents would occasionally visit the schools, they would be amply repaid for their trouble.

In District No. 18. A very good school has been kept by Messrs. Williams and Nash. Some symptoms of insubordination were promptly suppressed. Whole number, 98.

In District No. 19. The summer school was kept by Miss Choate. Number, 50. Winter school, by Mr Tappan, in excellent condition, and well supplied with books.

In District No. 20. Summer school kept by Miss Adams. Number, 45. An excellent school, except that it is rather destitute of books. Winter school by Mr Perkins. Number 45.

In District No. 21. A very good school has been kept by Charles Sawyer, Jr.

In District No. 22, the school kept by A. H. Bray, was small, but in good order, and of good behavior, and well managed.

In District No. 23, Charles H. Colman has taught an excellent school. Whole number 44. Average attendance 38.

In several of the last mentioned districts, and in the Harbor in too many of the Schools, *the study of Geography is greatly neglected.* This study is very important in a town like this.

In studying Arithmetic, we have found in several schools, a disposition to omit the vulgar fractions. Without a knowledge of these a boy is unfit for business.

But though there is room for amendment, the schools are in a better condition than they have ever been before within our knowledge; and if proper care be taken in the selection of teachers hereafter, they will continue to improve.

All which is respectfully submitted.

EPES ELLERY,  
ROBERT RANTOUL, JR.  
J. M. MORIARTY,  
WILLIAM LAMSON,  
LEONARD B. GRIFFING,  
TIMOTHY A. SMITH,  
GORHAM BABSON,  
ANDREW KINISON,  
NEHEMIAH KNOWLTON.

GLoucester, MARCH 1, 1839.